St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton

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PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

NAME: Minassian, Alek

D.O.B.: November 03, 1992
UNIT: Forensic Psychiatry Program

Report Date: November 20, 2019

PSYCHOLOGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Mr. Alek Minassian is a 25 year old man charged with 10 counts of 1st Degree Murder and 16 counts of Attempted Murder. He was referred to the St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, Forensic Psychiatry Program, for a psychiatric assessment under a Lesage Order. A psychological assessment was undertaken at the request of Psychiatrist, Dr. John Bradford. I was asked to assess Mr. Minassian's psychological and cognitive status.

Mr. Minassian was seen on August 15, 2018, September 5th, 6th, 7th, 2018, July 12, 2019 and September 5th, 2019. He was seen for approximately 15 hours. The latter two assessment sessions took place at the Toronto South Detention Centre.

At the outset of the assessment process, Mr. Minassian was informed of the limits of confidentiality and was made aware that a final report would be provided to Dr. Bradford. He was also made aware that the report, or at least parts of the report, could be made available to the court. Mr. Minassian was also informed that he could refuse to answer any specific questions and could terminate the assessment at any point. Mr. Minassian stated that he understood the cautions and provided signed consent for the assessment to be undertaken.

Tests Administered:

Cognitive

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-IV (WAIS-IV)
- Repeatable Battery of the Assessment of Neuropsychological Status (RBANS)

Psychological

- Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI)
- Anger Disorders Scale (ADS)
- The Paulhus Deception Scales (PDS)

It is noted that a detailed account of the official version of Mr. Minassian's index offences and his social history is well outlined in Dr. Bradford's report. The following will focus on Mr. Minassian's version of events as he reported them during the herein assessment and the results of the psychological testing.

Sources of Information:

It is noted that there was no documentation provided that formally outlined Mr. Minassian's charges and the allegations related to the same.

The following assessment is a reflection of the information provided by Mr. Minassian.

The undersigned did participate in an interview between Dr. Bradford and Mr. Minassian's parents on September 07, 2018. The details of this meeting are outlined in Dr. Bradford's report.

Index Offences:

As stated, no disclosure was provided regarding Mr. Minassian's charges and consequently, the following is Mr. Minassian's version of events.

When questioned about the charges of first degree murder and attempt murder, Mr. Minassian accepted responsibility for the same. He admitted to renting a van and driving towards pedestrians, with the intention of striking them on April 23, 2018. Mr. Minassian's conduct resulted in significant media coverage.

When questioned about his behaviour, Mr. Minassian admitted that he had been planning the attack for some time. He offered that around that time, he had received a job offer and was worried about failing and getting fired. He related that he secured the van rental about a week after receiving the job offer in late March/early April 2018. According to Mr. Minassian, he chose April 23rd, 2018 to execute his plan only because he had a college assignment due the day before.

When questioned about his use of a van for the attack, Mr. Minassian offered that he developed the idea through media reports outlining similar incidents. He noted "it is hard to get a gun in Canada." On further questioning, Mr. Minassian offered that he "never questioned why [he] was doing it or whether it was a bad idea…just nervous about going through with it." He related that it was his intention to kill people and to die himself. He added that it was his intention to gain media attention; he "wanted to be on the internet and have people comment about him." During these discussions about the index offences, it was clear that it did not matter whether he was receiving negative or positive media attention, he desired notoriety. During one session, he stated, "I'm curious about what people are saying about me…I would be excited to see what people are saying..even if it is negative."

According to Mr. Minassian, his interest in mass murders was initially tweaked in, or around, 2009. At that time, according to him, he started looking up Wikipedia reports and biographies of men who had engaged in mass murders including, Chris Harper Mercer (shot 10 people at a College), the Columbine Shooters, Adam Lanza (Virginia Tech murders), and Elliot Rodger. Mr. Minassian openly stated that he "related to" Elliot Rodger, stating that he (Mr.

Rodger) also "had difficulty making friends, was lonely, and had a hard time with girls." He admitted that he read Mr. Rodger's manifesto several times and watched his online videos, which outlined his anger towards women and jealousy towards men. According to Mr. Minassian, he came to espouse similar negative opinions and beliefs about women and men.

Mr. Minassian indicated that his interest in reading about individuals who had committed mass murders was "on and off" between 2009 and 2016. He offered that during this time, he occasionally looked up articles and watched videos. According to him, he became "obsessed" with the idea and spent a lot of time reading about and watching videos posted by those who had committed mass murders. He had a particular interest in Elliot Rodger. He noted that his interest lessened in 2017 and then became more pronounced in 2018. In his view, in early 2018, he again began to "fixate" on this particular type of perpetrator. He offered that it was not usual for him to "fixate on certain subjects" given his diagnosis of Autism.

Mr. Minassian acknowledged that the idea of the "massacre" came from the manifesto and videos of Elliot Rodger. He offered that although he likely would have preferred to use a gun, it was his opinion that obtaining a gun would be too difficult and he consequently decided that using a van would be convenient and efficient.

In Mr. Minassian's view, he achieved his goal and was able to achieve the notoriety that drove the behaviour. When asked if he would change anything, he offered that if he was able to do it again, he may have tried for a "higher kill count" and would have taken steps to ensure that he died during the incident.

Mr. Minassian discussed his offences in a rather matter of fact manner, showing little emotion. He did not express remorse for his actions.

Clinical Impressions

Mr. Alek Minassian is a 25 year old man who appears his stated age. He stands about 5'11" in height and is of slim build. He has short dark hair.

Mr. Minassian presented to each assessment session casually dressed (or dressed in standard issue correctional jumpsuit) and adequately groomed. He was pleasant and cooperative with the assessment process. He showed no evidence of motor agitation or restlessness. Mr. Minassian demonstrated good, if not at times, intense, eye-contact, and his affect presented as restricted, even when discussing his index offenses or the impact his actions had had on his family members. One of the only times he showed emotion was when asked if he was afforded the opportunity, would he like to see what was being written about him on the internet. During his conversation, he seemed to brighten and seemed somewhat excited about the possibility of being able to read about himself on the internet.

Clinically, Mr. Minassian was oriented in all spheres and his thinking, as reflected in his speech was clear and logical. There was no evidence of psychosis or thought disorder. Mr. Minassian did present as an individual who appears to struggle in his social interactions and has difficulty judging social interactions. As an example, on one occasion when the undersigned was setting up testing and the room was silent, he asked if I was waiting for him to start a conversation.

When the undersigned met with him in July and September 2019, there was no change in his presentation or interaction style. When asked how he viewed his index offences during these sessions, Mr. Minassian indicated that he did not spend too much time thinking about the offences and was focused on "moving forward." And, when asked about the possible impact that his offences had on his parents, Mr. Minassian indicated that he was unsure how the offences and the resultant media attention, would have impacted his parents or brother. When asked to consider this, he was able to state that they were likely "sad, upset." It was clear during these interactions that Mr. Minassian struggles with empathy. While he is able to voice victim empathy when pushed to do so (i.e. he can state that the victims are likely angry), he does not connect emotionally.

Mr. Minassian's general presentation and interaction style was consistent with someone who holds the diagnosis of Autism.

Psychological Test Results:

Mr. Minassian was cooperative with testing and appeared to be putting forth good effort. He had no difficulty comprehending test instructions or completing the tasks presented to him.

Wherever possible, Mr. Minassian' psychological test results are presented as percentiles. A percentile indicates the percent of a distribution that is equal to or below that score (e.g., a score at the 25th percentile means that the score is equal to/better than 25% of the group).[1] Where possible, raw scores from tests were converted to percentiles based on norms for age, education, gender, and setting (e.g., general population vs. forensic inpatients). Scores should be interpreted within the context of this report and not independently.

Intellectual/Cognitive Functioning:

Mr. Minassian was administered the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, Fourth Edition (WAIS-IV), a comprehensive measure of intellectual ability. His full scale IQ estimate was said to fall in the high average range (87th percentile). His verbal comprehension demonstrated a relative strength over his perceptual reasoning, with his verbal comprehension falling in the superior range and his perceptual reasoning falling in the average range (94th and 61st percentiles respectively). His working memory (ability to hold and manipulate information) also fell in the superior range (96th percentile). His processing speed was a relative weakness, with this domain falling in the average range (50th percentile).

When each domain is examined in detail, Mr. Minassian demonstrated a relatively consistent profile. In terms of the subtests that comprise the verbal comprehension domain, a relative strength was seen in his verbal reasoning skills (Similarities: 98th percentile) and expressive language skills (Vocabulary: 91st percentile) which fell in the superior range over his fund of knowledge (Information: 75th percentile), which fell in the average range. When the subtests that comprise the perceptual reasoning domain were examined, Mr. Minassian demonstrated

[1]Scores between the 25th and 75th percentile are considered to fall within the average (or expected) range for age. Those above the 75th are considered high average, whereas those above the 92nd percentile are superior. Scores between the 9th and 24th percentile are considered low average for age, those between the 2.2nd and 8th percentile are considered borderline, and those below the 2.2nd percentile are considered extremely low.

a notable strength in his visual processing/fluid reasoning skills (Matrix Reasoning: 91st percentile), which fell in the superior range, over his non-verbal reasoning (visual puzzles: 25th percentile) and spatial perception/perceptual organization skills (block design: 50th percentile) which fell in the average range. In terms of working memory, Mr. Minassian's performance on a scale examining attention and mental control fell in the high average range (digit span: 84th percentile) while his mental math skills fell in the superior range (arithmetic: 98th percentile). In examining his performance on the subtests measuring processing speed, Mr. Minassian, had no significant difference between his ability to learn new skills and psychomotor speed (coding: 63rd percentile) over his visual perception speed (symbol search: 37th percentile) as both fell in the average range.

The Social Cognition subtests of the WAIS-IV were also administered to assess Mr. Minassian's ability to process social information. Mr. Minassian was administered the Social Perceptions (social aptitude), Faces I (ability to learn and recall new faces) and Faces II (delayed recall). In terms of Mr. Minassian's performance on the tasks assessing Social Perception, while he performed at the lower end of the average range for affect naming and prosody (scaled score=8 or 25th percentile on both), he struggled with recognizing the nuance of language, specifically identifying how tone can change the meaning of what is said (Prosody Pair Matching: scaled score 4 or 2nd percentile). His performance on tasks requiring him to learn and recall faces was a relative strength, with these tasks falling in the high average or superior range. His ability to recall emotions fell in the low average to average range (cumulative percentage: 17-25th percentile).

Mr. Minassian also completed the Repeatable Battery for the Assessment of Neuropsychological Status (RBANS), a brief battery designed to detect neurocognitive deficits in a number of areas, including immediate and delayed memory, attention, language, and visuospatial skills. Mr. Minassian's overall composite score on the RBANS placed him in the Average range of functioning (27th percentile). There was little scatter seen across the areas measured. He demonstrated a relative weakness in his visuo-spatial/constructional skills, with this domain falling in the low average range (14th percentile). All other areas measured fell in the average range (immediate memory, 42nd percentile; language, 61st percentile, attention, 27th percentile, and delayed memory, 34th percentile).

Mr. Minassian's performance on the cognitive measures suggest that his cognitive functioning is largely intact. His performance on the social cognition subtests, however, do suggest that he has difficulty with the nuance of language and is likely to interpret language in a concrete manner.

Personality and Psychopathology

Mr. Minassian was administered the Paulhus Deception Scale (PDS) to assess his tendency to answer questionnaires in a socially desirable manner. Mr. Minassian's total PDS score was elevated (91st percentile, high average) range suggesting that he may be inclined to present himself in a positive light. When the two subscales of the PDS are examined, he demonstrated an elevation on the Impression Management Scale (IM: 95th percentile, high average) but his Self-Deceptive Enhancement Scale (SDE: 34th percentile, average range) was not elevated. The high IM score suggests that Mr. Minassian may be presenting himself in an overly positive light due to situational demands. It does not appear that this is a trait like tendency as reflected by the average SDE score.

Mr. Minassian was administered the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI), a measure of personality and psychopathology. His profile was considered valid, although there was some indication of idiosyncratic responding.

Substantively, Mr. Minassian's PAI was marked by significant elevations across a number of different scales. The configuration of the clinical scales was indicative of an individual who is unhappy, moody, and is experiencing tension. He described his self-esteem as rather low and he views himself as ineffectual and powerless to change the direction of his life. He reported experiencing difficulties in his concentrating and decision making.

Mr. Minassian's responses on the PAI, indicated that he is experiencing uncomfortable levels of anxiety and tension. He is having difficulty concentrating and his attention is impacted. He also reported he is inclined to monitor his environment in an effort to avoid anxiety provoking situations or triggers. His responses also suggest that he is feeling symptoms of depression including, thoughts of worthlessness, hopelessness, and personal failure. He feels sad, a loss of interest in normal activities, and a loss of pleasure in things he used to enjoy but is not experiencing many physiological signs of depression. He denied experiencing any changes in energy, appetite, weight, or sleep patterns. His responses indicate that he is uncertain about many life issues and feels that he has little sense of direction or purpose at present. It is noted that at the time that this measure was administered, Mr. Minassian described low mood, not because he was regretful of his actions, but rather because, the full extent of his plan had not been executed. His responses did suggest that he has intense and recurrent thoughts of suicide. Of note, it was his plan to die by suicide by cop during the commission of his offences. Although he did report ongoing thoughts of suicide during my initial meetings with him, these thoughts dissipated over time and during my most recent meeting, he denied thoughts of suicide and confirmed that he had not had such thoughts for some time.

Regarding the experience of anger, Mr. Minassian described himself as very meek and unassertive.

In terms of self-concept, Mr. Minassian's appears to view himself in a rather harsh and negative light. He is prone to be self-critical and pessimistic, dwelling on past failures and lost opportunities. He is consequently very uncomfortable and passive in social situations. He is inclined to take a submissive, withdrawn stance when dealing with others, and has little confidence when interacting with others. Mr. Minassian does acknowledge having long standing difficulties managing social situations-which is in keeping with the diagnosis of Autism. And, although he has the support of his parents and brother, Mr. Minassian's responses on the PAI suggest that he feels that his level of social support is lower than the average adult.

In terms of treatment motivation, Mr. Minassian's responses suggest that his motivation is at par with individuals being seen in a clinical or treatment setting. He endorsed having a positive attitude towards the possibility of personal change, the value of therapy, and the importance of personal responsibility.

Mr. Minassian was also administered the Anger Disorders Scale (ADS), a measure of dysfunctional anger in adults. His profile was considered valid. This total ADS score was suggestive of mild anger pathology. It appears that Mr. Minassian demonstrates mild

problems with rumination and suspiciousness. He is likely to act out in a passive aggressive or indirect manner, and may be impulsive at times. Mr. Minassian's score on the resentment scale did fall in the moderate range, suggesting that he is likely to reflect a great deal on his past disappointments. He may blame others for his failures and covets others' success. He may endorse beliefs that he should have had a better life. Mr. Minassian also demonstrated a moderate score on the Brooding subscale, suggesting that he is inclined to hold in his feelings of anger. Individuals with this elevation can also experience symptoms of depression-which is consistent with his PAI profile.

Diagnosis:

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Summary:

Mr. Alek Minassian is a 25 year old man charged with 10 counts of 1st Degree Murder and 16 counts of Attempted Murder. The events took place on April 23rd, 2018. Mr. Minassian drove a rented van down Yonge Street in Toronto deliberately striking pedestrians. His case has garnered significant media attention.

During the herein assessment, Mr. Minassian accepted responsibility for his offending behaviour. It was his position that he was striving to continue the work of his idol, Elliot Rodger and contribute to the Incel Rebellion movement. Underlying this, in my view, was a desire to achieve infamy, to be seen and acknowledged in some way. He acknowledged that he had planned out the attack and had reserved the van three weeks prior to executing his plan. It appears that he chose April 23rd, because he had wanted to submit a college paper that he was due on April 22nd, 2018.

In terms of background, Mr. Minassian was raised in a prosocial middle-class home environment that was free of any emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. He was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 5 and was provided special education resources throughout his academic tenure. He graduated high-school and later completed a Bachelor of Software Development degree through Seneca College. He noted that he had submitted his final paper on the day before the attack and consequently, was not sure if he had actually earned the degree.

Given his diagnosis, it does appear that Mr. Minassian struggled socially. It was my impression that while he desired relationships and friendships, he lacked the skills to develop or maintain the same. That said, he did have a couple of close male friends with whom he socialized.

Mr. Minassian initially began to research mass murderers (school shooters) and Elliot Rodgers in or around 2009. He offered that between 2009 and 2016, he would periodically read or look up articles about the Incel movement or related topics. It is his position that in 2016, his interest became much more focused, he became "obsessed" and would spend a significant amount of time on the computer reading Elliot Rodger's manifesto and related articles. He offered that while his interest waned in 2017, it increased again in 2018. He again became rather focused on the ideas presented by Elliot Rodger and began to develop a plan to use a rented van to strike down pedestrians. Because Mr. Minassian struggles with

empathy, he likely did not consider the possible emotional impact that his actions would have on others. His behavior was goal directed and concrete, with little consideration of how his actions would impact victims, his own family, or the community at large. When I first met with Mr. Minassian, he stated that if he could have done it again, he would have wanted a higher "kill count" and he would have made sure that his desire to suicide would have been realized. During more recent meetings, Mr. Minassian has stated that he is no longer focused on the notion of notoriety and does not spend much time thinking about Elliot Rodger, the Incel movement, or his own offences. It was my impression that he continues to have no emotional connection to his offences or the impact that his conduct has had on others, including his parents.

In terms of his psychometric profile, Mr. Minassian's psychological test results indicate that he is a rather bright man who functions in the high average range. He does not present with any notable cognitive deficits. In terms of his social functioning, while he is able to recognize, recall, and name emotions and faces, it does appear that he struggles with the nuance of language and interprets language in a concrete fashion. Specifically, he appears to struggle with how tone can change the meaning of a sentence.

With respect to personality, Mr. Minassian does not present with any serious psychopathology although he did report experiencing notable anxiety and symptoms of depression when assessed in August and September 2018.

Mr. Minassian is a man whose offending behaviour appears on the surface to be motivated by a desire for notoriety and infamy. However, his is a young man who is diagnosed with Autism. Because of his diagnosis, he has struggled to form and maintain close connections with others, particularly females, despite a desire to do so. Lacking the skills to manage his frustrations and desires, he sought out others online, who in his opinion, mirrored his experience. As is common for those with Autism, he developed a fixation or became focused on a particular subject, specifically Elliot Rodger and the Incel rebellion. Over time as his fixation grew, he developed a plan to emulate Elliot Rodger. And in doing so, he rented a van and struck down pedestrians as he drove down Yonge Street in Toronto.

And, consistent with his diagnosis, Mr. Minassian is now, more than a year later, able to compartmentalize his conduct and has no emotional connection to his offences.

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